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POPULATION COMMISSION ACTING AS
THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR
THE 1994 INTERNATIONAL MEETING
ON POPULATION
First session
4-8 March 1991
Agenda item 5

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

Draft report

Addendum

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Chapter III. INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON POPULATION

1. The Preparatory Committee considered agenda item 4 at its 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th meetings, on 4, 5 and 6 March 1991. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for a 1994 international meeting on population (E/1991/5).

2. Many delegations commended the Secretariat for the quality of the documentation produced for the session. They also stressed that the future work of the Preparatory Committee would be greatly facilitated if the relevant documents were made available in all official languages well in advance of its meetings.

3. A large number of delegations thanked the Secretary-General of the International Meeting on Population for her thoughtful and comprehensive statement to the Committee. Her statement was considered an excellent introduction for the deliberations of the first session of the Preparatory Committee.

A. Objectives and format

4. The importance of the World Population Plan of Action 1/ and the recommendations for further implementation of the Plan 2/ was emphasized by many of the delegations. The Plan's role as a source of guidance for Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations was stressed. It was noted, however, that the international community remained far from achieving the objectives set forth in the Plan of Action. In addition, several delegations noted that whereas the majority of the recommendations of the Plan remained valid, a number had lost relevance in the light of changes that had taken place in the world demographic picture over the past 20 years.

5. Many delegations noted that the objectives of the 1994 International Meeting on Population proposed by the Secretary-General in his report were generally in correspondence with their views. There was general agreement with the first three objectives proposed - namely, (a) to participate in the review and appraisal of the World Population Plan of Action, (b) to maintain and strengthen the level of awareness of population issues and (c) to provide guidance on their treatment. In relation to the fourth, that is, to adopt a set of recommendations for the next decade, several delegations suggested that the objective be elaborated and made more specific. While some delegates recommended that the fourth objective should only make reference to the issues of primary concern for the next decade, others suggested that reference should be made to updating the Plan of Action.

6. Several delegations felt that the objectives of the 1994 Meeting should take the fullest account of the International Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, which had been recently adopted by the General Assembly; the Amsterdam Declaration, adopted in 1989 by the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century; and the conclusions of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly.

7. Many delegations suggested that the 1994 event be called a "conference" instead of a "meeting". It should have a single overarching theme within which specific topics and issues could be considered. Two of the themes suggested were population and development, and population and sustainable development.

8. Many delegations felt that given the nature and magnitude of changes since the 1974 World Population Conference and the 1984 International Conference on Population, there was a need to update the recommendations accordingly and to address the issue of population within the broader perspective of development. It was hoped that the 1994 Meeting would promote greater cooperation within the international community in the field of population and development. In addition, several delegations felt that the Meeting should review the demographic changes that had occurred since the 1984 Conference, with the aim of formulating a new programme of action in the area of population.

9. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a large group of delegations, noted that the report on the preparations for a 1994 international meeting on population (E/1991/75) provided a good basis for the work of the Preparatory Committee. It felt, however, that in order to ensure a satisfactory outcome of the 1994 Meeting, population questions must not be examined in isolation or only in terms of their

technical aspects, but must be inextricably linked to development. To that end, no particular sectoral concern should be given prominence, as it was believed that other sectoral issues relevant to population and development were of equal importance and concern.

10. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a number of others, observed that there was a need to address the complex interrelationship between population growth and development, in order to improve the standard of living and quality of life by bringing about a sustainable relationship between human numbers, resources, development and the environment. The delegation also added that the 1994 Meeting should result in a new document with a set of operational recommendations.

11. Another delegation, speaking on behalf of another group, stressed that it was important that the outcome of the 1994 Meeting be concrete and operational. Those delegations would welcome a clear setting of priorities and fewer, but more specific, actions and recommendations emanating from the Meeting, instead of a long and vague plan of action. Moreover, the recommendations of the 1974 World Population Conference and the 1984 International Conference on Population should be consolidated. Those delegations continued to attach special importance to the issues of family planning, the role and status of women, the environment and rural-to-urban migration and international migration.

12. A number of delegations supported the view that the 1994 Meeting should give more attention to making operational recommendations. The relationship between population and development should receive high priority and should be the major focus of the preparatory work and of the Meeting itself. Reasons for the failure to fully implement the recommendations of the 1974 World Population Conference and the 1984 International Conference on Population should also be analysed.

13. Several delegations indicated that the 1994 Meeting would provide an opportunity to promote greater awareness of population issues and their interrelationship with developmental and environmental concerns. In this regard, they felt that the Meeting's primary goal should be to expand the scope of the efforts to stabilize population growth as a part of national development and conservation strategies in support of sustainable development.

14. One delegation emphasized that three issues should be taken into account in preparing for the meeting: (a) national leaders must have the necessary institutional and managerial capacity to plan and implement effective population policies and programmes; (b) community participation in designing and implementing policies and programmes must be ensured; and (c) women must be involved fully at all levels in planning and implementing programmes.

B. The issues to be discussed

15. Most delegations indicated their interest in the six major issues that had been identified for the 1994 Meeting. They stressed, however, that those issues should be addressed within the general theme of population and development. It was also emphasized that the policy aspects of every issue should be discussed by each of the proposed expert group meetings, the strategy that would be most likely to lead to operational recommendations.

16. Several delegations stated that the topics suggested in the document under discussion had been well chosen. Some attention, however, should be given to the elaboration of the focus of the expert groups.

17. Some delegations felt that environment should not be considered as a separate issue, while others held the view that environment should be addressed specifically within the context of sustainable development. More specifically, several delegations proposed that the theme of population, environment and development should be changed to population and development.

18. Some delegations suggested that attention should also be accorded to changes in world population size and age structure, acceleration in rural-to-urban migration, urbanization and the deterioration of the environment. Several delegations referred to the importance of addressing the role of women, the family, questions of health, morbidity and mortality, accessibility to family planning services and the need for adequate resources to implement population programmes.

19. Some delegations suggested that family planning be considered as a separate issue, given its relevance to the work of the United Nations in the field of population. They added that family planning should be high on the agenda of the Meeting in so far as family planning programmes had contributed to the decline of fertility in many developing countries.

20. Several delegations emphasized that the issue of ageing should be given adequate attention and should be dealt with in depth. It was suggested that the issue of demographic ageing could be properly considered in the context of population structure.

21. Several delegations felt that the theme of population redistribution should be reformulated so as to explicitly include the problem of internal migration. Specifically, the work of the expert group on migration should take into consideration the different forms of internal migration, including movement between cities, from one rural area to another and from cities to rural areas, as well as from rural to urban areas. More emphasis could thereby be given to the importance of balanced regional development.

22. A number of delegations stated that the question of international migration would be a very important issue for consideration by the 1994 Meeting. Some added that the discussion should include the determinants and consequences of international migration, as well as the important issue of refugees.

23. The representative of the International Planned Parenthood Federation suggested that the 1994 Meeting should provide authoritative status reports reflecting the demographic and population trends of the past decade. It should also consider the larger needs for family planning today and in the twenty-first century in the light of the lessons learned, and consider the best strategies to meet those needs. The representative of the Population Council noted that family planning and other reproductive health programmes should be given explicit attention as the focus of one of the expert group meetings. The scope of the planned expert group meeting on women and population should also be broadened to

consider the wider and longer-term effects for women's health and social and economic well-being. The representative of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) offered its full cooperation in the scientific preparation for the 1994 Meeting.

C. Nature of the preparatory work

24. It was strongly emphasized that the regional commissions should be fully involved in the preparatory activities for the 1994 Meeting. Their participation would ensure that regional issues and viewpoints were adequately reflected in the final set of recommendations to be adopted. The timing of regional conferences should be such as to ensure that their output would be available to the Preparatory Committee well in advance of the 1994 Meeting.

25. Some delegations felt that the organization of the expert group meetings should ensure effective participation by developing countries. It was further suggested that the six priority themes should be regrouped to reflect a more comprehensive handling of population and development and, if possible, to reduce the proposed number of expert group meetings.

26. Several delegations expressed their agreement with the suggestion made by the Secretary-General of the 1994 Meeting that experts involved in the preparatory work would participate in their personal capacity. Several delegations also suggested that full use should be made of government experts. It was noted that it might be desirable to have scientific experts and government experts work together from the very beginning of the preparatory process. It was also suggested that some experts be invited to the 1994 Meeting as resource persons.

27. Several delegations stressed the importance of the substantive findings of the expert group meetings and hoped that those findings would be reflected and properly taken into account in the recommendations of the 1994 Meeting.

28. The proposal made by the Secretary-General requesting the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to establish a task force for the meeting, ensuring inter-agency coordination, was welcomed. It was noted that the specialized agencies would be invited to participate in the expert group meetings according to their area of expertise.

29. There was wide support for the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory activities for the 1994 Meeting and for their participation in the Meeting itself.

D. Organizational matters

30. Several delegations noted that coordination of the preparatory work within the United Nations system would be necessary to ensure the success of the 1994 Meeting. It was recognized that there was a need for coordination among the different organizations of the United Nations system and for incorporating the results of other important meetings on population.

31. Many delegations suggested that two more sessions of the Preparatory Committee would be needed in order to complete all the necessary work before the 1994 Meeting. Some expressed the view that the second session of the Preparatory Committee might be convened in conjunction with the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission in 1993 in order to facilitate supervision by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, to benefit from the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992) and to allow for discussion of the results of the expert group meetings. The third session of the Preparatory Committee could then take place in early 1994.

32. The representative of the International Planned Parenthood Federation emphasized that grass-roots organizations should be involved in all aspects of the preparatory work for the Meeting. The representative of the Population Council requested that concerned non-governmental organizations be fully involved in the preparatory process and in the Meeting itself. The Population Council offered its collaboration in the planning and implementation of the expert group meeting on women and population.

33. The representative of Tunisia officially presented an offer, made by the Minister of Health of the Government of Tunisia during the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-first Century, to host the 1994 Meeting.

34. The representative of Egypt also announced its Government's willingness to host the 1994 Meeting.

35. The representative of Germany stated that her Government had already agreed to hold the expert group meeting on population, environment and development in Berlin in November 1991.

36. The representative of China stressed his Government's interest in an expert group meeting on the issue of family planning. If an expert group meeting were to be organized, his Government would be prepared to make a financial contribution.

37. The representative of Italy expressed his Government's willingness to host an expert group meeting on the subject of international migration.

38. The representative of France indicated his Government's willingness to host one of the six expert group meetings.

39. The representative of Belgium informed the Preparatory Committee that his Government would be willing to host the expert group meeting on women and development.

40. The Secretary-General of the 1994 Meeting explained that the secretariat for the Meeting would consist of staff from the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Population Fund. A steering committee, made up of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation and representatives of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development and the United Nations Population Fund had already met twice. At future meetings it might enlarge its membership to include other relevant units of the United Nations Secretariat.

41. Mention was made of the desirability of providing adequate funding to ensure the full participation of developing countries in the preparatory work for the 1994 Meeting. The Secretary-General of the Meeting said that special consideration might have to be given to the participation of some developing countries.

E. Financial implications

42. The Preparatory Committee discussed the financial implications of convening the 1994 Meeting, including the preparatory activities. The subject was introduced by a representative of the Secretariat, who referred to section V of the report of the Secretary-General on preparations for a 1994 meeting on population (E/1991/5). In introducing the document, the representative noted that all costs were currently included in the programme budget proposals for the biennium 1992-1993. The Secretary-General would seek resources and would inform the General Assembly on the extent to which such resources could be made available. The representative drew the attention of the Preparatory Committee to the proposal concerning expert group meetings and the expert group servicing costs presented in paragraphs 68 and 69 of document E/1991/5.

43. Delegations agreed that the 1994 Meeting and its preparatory activities should be carried out as economically as possible. There was considerable discussion concerning the proportion of costs that should be met from the regular budget and from extrabudgetary sources. Some delegations suggested that costs should be met solely or mainly from within the United Nations programme budget, similar to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and consistent with the principle of burden-sharing. However, it was also suggested that extrabudgetary resources should be utilized to the fullest extent possible in order to minimize the burden on the regular programme budget of the United Nations and on the operational activities of the United Nations Population Fund.

44. Delegations expressed concern that the Governments of some developing countries, particularly the least developed among them, would lack the resources to participate fully in the preparatory activities and in the 1994 Meeting. It was proposed that modalities be developed to ensure the participation of those Governments.

45. One delegation noted that the report of the Secretary-General considered the mobilization of resources to carry out revised recommendations of the World Population Plan of Action and that the Secretary-General of the Meeting should suggest scenarios for obtaining the necessary resources.

46. Delegations noted that the financial implications and the questions concerning the nature and type of organizational activities were complex and that it was not practical to discuss financial implications until agreement had been obtained on organizational activities. In that context, the Preparatory Committee discussed options with respect to future sessions of the Preparatory Committee and the expert group meetings.

47. Concerning future sessions of the Preparatory Committee, delegations favoured holding the second and third sessions in August 1993 and February 1994. There was considerable discussion on the timing of those meetings and the need to coordinate them with the dates of regional preparatory meetings, expert group meetings and documentation, while at the same time scheduling them so as to minimize the cost implications. In that context, some delegations suggested that the twenty-seventh session of the Population Commission be delayed so that it could be held together with the second session of the Preparatory Committee. That option would require the Economic and Social Council to resume its second regular session in order to consider the report of the Population Commission.

48. Many delegations offered suggestions on ways to minimize the financial implications of the expert group meetings. Some delegations urged that the fullest possible use be made of activities included in the regular programme of work of the Population Division of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and of the United Nations Population Fund in the preparations for the 1994 Meeting as a way to minimize the number of preparatory expert group meetings and their size. A representative of the United Nations Secretariat pointed out that the purpose of the expert group meetings was to formulate action-oriented recommendations for Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in line with the World Population Plan of Action. The proposed expert group meetings aimed to draw from and build on, inter alia, the research and policy findings from regular United Nations activities to produce operational plans of action.

49. Delegations agreed that in order to minimize costs, the possibility of limiting the working language of the expert group meetings to English, as long as there were no implications for the selection of experts. Reports prepared for the expert groups could be submitted in any working language with translations provided by the United Nations Secretariat into English; the recommendations and conclusions of the expert groups would be made available in all working languages. One delegation noted that there could be a compromise between English only and interpretation in all six working languages; the language facilities available could be determined by the experts invited.

50. One delegation expressed concern that no budgeting for the regional conferences was indicated, except for the participation of one staff member from the United Nations Secretariat. It was not clear how the regional meetings would be integrated into the preparatory process. The representative of the United Nations Secretariat pointed out that no additional budgeting was indicated because the regional meetings would be conducted independently from the 1994 Meeting.

51. Some delegations expressed concern that the number of professional work-months contributed to the preparatory work for the 1994 Meeting by the Population Division and UNFPA might not be adequate. The representative of the Secretariat indicated that the number indicated was for staff resources dedicated purely to the preparatory work and that the regular programme of work was also being oriented to contribute to preparations for the Meeting.

Chapter II. PROVISIONAL RULES OF PROCEDURE, PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON POPULATION

52. The Preparatory Committee considered the draft provisional rules of procedure for the 1994 International Meeting on Population (E/CONF.84/PC/2). The rules of procedure were similar to those adopted for the 1984 International Conference on Population. The representative of Ghana, on behalf of the Group of 77, requested that the adoption of the rules of procedure be postponed.

53. Some delegations suggested that rule 60, which defined the status of non-governmental organizations, be revised to increase the role of non-governmental organizations in the preparations for the Meeting and their participation in the Meeting itself. The representative of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions suggested that the Preparatory Committee make provisions to ensure that those non-governmental organizations with consultative status be fully involved in the different activities of the Preparatory Committee and in the 1994 Meeting.

Notes

1/ Report of the United Nations World Population Conference, Bucharest, 19-30 August 1974 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.75.XIII.3), chap. I.

2/ Report of the International Conference on Population, Mexico City, 6-14 August 1984 (United Nations publications, Sales No. E.84.XIII.8 and corrigenda).